GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:108
ANSWERED ON:23.11.2016
Recall of Diplomats
Owaisi Shri Asaduddin

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a number of diplomats including officials have been recalled or have been asked to leave the country by India and Pakistan in the recent past;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) the present sanctioned strength of Indian High Commission in Pakistan and Pakistan High Commission in India; and

(d) the details of diplomatic channels being used by both the countries to normalise the situation?

Answer

THE MINISTER FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
(SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ)

(a) to (d) A statement is laid on the table of the House.

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STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (d) OF THE LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 108 REGARDING "RECALL OF DIPLOMATS" FOR ANSWER ON 23.11.2016

On October 27, 2016 a staff member of the High Commission of Pakistan in New Delhi, Mehmood Akhtar, was apprehended by Indian authorities while indulging in anti India activities and was declared persona non grata on October 28, 2016.

2. Government summoned the Pakistan High Commissioner on October 28, 2016 and registered strong protest about the activities of Mehmood Akhtar. He left India on October 29, 2016 along with his family.

3. On October 28, 2016 the Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared Shri Surjeet Singh, Assistant Public Welfare Officer in the Indian High Commission in Islamabad as persona non grata without providing any justification, except for the baseless and unsubstantiated allegation that his activities were not in keeping with diplomatic norms. Shri Surjeet Singh subsequently returned to India on October 29, 2016.

4. On November 2, 2016 Government of Pakistan withdrew six Pakistan High Commission officials (Syed Farrukh Habib, Counsellor; Mudassar Iqbal Cheema, First Secretary (Press); Muhammad Sahid Sohail, First Secretary (Trade); Imtiaz Hussain, Driver and Staff Members Meherban Ali and Ashiq Ali Bhutto) whose names had reportedly appeared in media as a result of the interrogation of Mehmood Akhtar. It was Government of Pakistan's own decision to withdraw these six officials without any prior communication to the Government of India regarding the same. They left India on November 2, 2016 along with 25 family members .

5. Pakistan withdrew another two officials, Muhammad Nawaz and Sajjad Ali Butt along with seven family members on November 16, 2016.

6 . On November 2, 2016 Pakistani media prominently carried names of eight Indian officials of the High Commission of India, Islamabad (S/Shri R K Agnihotri, Counsellor; Balbir Singh, First Secreatary; Anurag Singh, First Secreatary (Trade); Amandeep Singh Bhatti, Attache; J Senthil, APWO and Assistants D Sodhi, V K Verma and M Nandakumar), along with their photographs. The media reports alleged that these officials were involved in subversive and terrorist activities in Pakistan. On November 3, in the weekly media briefing Pakistani Ministry of Foreign Affairs officially released their names and official designations. The litany of baseless charges against them was repeated.

7. In view of safety and security of these officials and their family members, all of them returned to India in three batches on November 8, 10 and 12, 2016.

8 . The allegations against Indian officials represent an afterthought on the part of Government of Pakistan and constitute a crude attempt to tarnish the image of India. The manner in which their names and photographs were prominently published in Pakistani media along with baseless allegation reiterated without any corraboration by Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs is against the Vienna Convention and also violates the norms of established diplomatic practice and courtesies.

9. As per mutual understanding between India and Pakistan, the effective strength of respective diplomatic Missions cannot exceed 110 at any point of time.

10. Government had taken a number of initiatives to normalise India-Pakistan relations, peacefully and bilaterally, in an environment free from terrorism and violence. At the same time, Government is also resolutely committed to take all necessary steps to ensure the security of the nation and the safety of our citizens.